DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 133 CS 217 181

TITLE	Tales of the Supernatural. [Lesson Plan].
SPONS AGENCY	National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, DC.; Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, DC.; MCI WorldCom, Arlington, VA.
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	4p.; Also sponsored by the National Trust for the Humanities.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://edsitement.neh.gov/lessonplans.html.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	English Literature; High Schools; Language Arts; Lesson Plans; *Literary Genres; *Literature Appreciation; Novels; United States Literature
IDENTIFIERS	*Gothic; *Horror Fiction

ABSTRACT

Monsters have haunted the literary imagination from earliest times (e.g., the Cyclops, Grendel, etc.), but a particular interest in horror and the Gothic form dates back to the 18th and early 19th centuries. Taking their name from the Gothic architecture that often served as a backdrop to the action, these novels present supernatural events in naturalistic terms, thrilling readers with strange tales filled with mystery and terror. The learning objectives of this lesson plan are: to explore the origins and development of a literary genre; to investigate how shared imaginative concerns link the members of a literary period; to examine the evolution of a literary tradition; and to compare works of literature from different eras. The lesson plan also contains the subject areas covered in the lesson, time required to complete the lesson, the skills used in the lesson, the grade level (10-12), and lists of the standards developed by professional or government associations that are related to the lesson, as well as activities to extend the lesson. (RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 442 133

Tales of the Supernatural [Lesson Plan].

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

CS 217 181

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Tales of the Supernatural

◂ BACK TO
Home
Lesson Plans

SEARCH EDSITEMENT

Introduction

Monsters have haunted the literary imagination from earliest times (e.g., the Cyclops, **Grendel**, etc.), but a particular interest in horror and the Gothic form dates back to the 18th and early 19th century. Taking their name from the Gothic architecture that often served as a backdrop to the action, these novels present supernatural events in naturalistic terms, thrilling readers with strange tales filled with mystery and terror.

Learning Objectives

To explore the origins and development of a literary genre; to investigate how shared imaginative concerns link the members of a literary period; to examine the evolution of a literary tradition; to compare works of literature from different eras.

Lesson Plan

1 Begin by asking how many students have read a horror story or seen a horror movie. Explain the relationship of modern horror stories to the Gothic novel, and tell students that at least one writer in the Gothic tradition continues to terrify readers even today -- Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, who at age 18 published the classic horror story, Frankenstein, in 1818.

2 Use the **Romantic Circles** website to introduce students to Mary Shelley and the legacy of her greatest literary creation. Within the "Scholarly Resources" section of the site, click on "Mary Shelley's Frankenstein" and follow the link to "Other resources for studying Mary Shelley." Here your students will find information about her life, background on the Romantic circumstances that gave rise to her novel, and (what may be of most immediate interest to them) images from some of the many films that have featured her monster. Working with these images (and any other incarnations of the Frankenstein monster with which they may be familiar), have students comment on what the monster has come to mean in our century. Are we terrified by him as a violation of nature? Do we feel pity for him as an orphan of science? Do we admire him as an embodiment of the indomitable will? Why has he continued to lumber through the popular imagination?

3 Have students read Frankenstein. (Online editions of Frankenstein are available through the "Other resources for studying Mary Shelley" link at the **Romantic Circles** website.) Focus discussion initially on differences students perceive between the original story and its translations into the terms of popular culture. In what respects is the original a horror story? In what

Literature: American

Literature: British

Literature: Fiction

10-12

analysis of literary texts
critical thinking
interpretation
collaborative work
Internet research

NCTE/IRA List of Standards for the English Language Arts

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; (more)
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience. (more)
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. (more)
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. (more)
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiencees for a variety of purposes. (more)
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

respects is it a serious imaginative exploration of the human condition? Why have some readers called it the first work of science fiction? What view of science does the novel present to us? How is this concern with science signalled by the novel's subtitle, "The Modern Prometheus"? (Remind students that Prometheus, credited in mythology with bringing fire from the heavens to the earth, is usually understood as an emblem of human creativity, particularly as expressed through science and technology. Have students search for information about Prometheus on the **Perseus Project** website.) Who is the Prometheus of the story -- Frankenstein or his monster? And what does this Prometheus symbolize? Conclude this discussion by having students write a short critical essay comparing the original Frankenstein to what it has become in popular culture, arguing either that much has been lost in the story's transformation or that it has been refined to its imaginative essence in the retelling.

4 Next have students work in research teams to investigate some American tales of the supernatural, using the resources of the **Nathaniel Hawthorne** website. Among Hawthorne's own works they might read "Young Goodman Brown" and "Rappaccini's Daughter" in *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Links within the Hawthorne website will lead them to many examples of the Gothic in the work of Edgar Allan Poe, stories like "Berenice," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "The Tell-Tale Heart," and his well-known poem, "The Raven." Have each team focus on one story, noting similarities to the themes and story-telling techniques of Frankenstein, particularly the part science may play in setting the stage for the supernatural. After each group has reported on its story, discuss as a class the distinguishing features of Hawthorne's and Poe's work in this genre. Ask students to explore the effect on them as readers of a story by Hawthorne in the third person and by Poe in the first person. Hawthorne tells his stories in the third person and shapes them as allegories and fables, thereby diffusing their emotional impact; Poe, by contrast, generally tells his stories in the first person and shapes them to highlight the psychology of the narrator, thereby tightening their grip on the reader's emotions. Students can explore the consequences of these alternative techniques by writing a short film scenario for one episode from each author.

Extending the Lesson

To conclude, invite students to report on modern-day tales of the supernatural that they have enjoyed. These might include **Toni Morrison's** *Sula* and *Beloved,* the stories of **Isaac Bashevis Singer**, the "Goosebumps" and "Fear Street" books of R. L. Stine, the novels of **Stephen King**, and the vampire novels of **Anne Rice**. You can broaden the discussion by inviting reports on films as well, particularly films like the "Alien" and "Jurassic Park" series which highlight the connection between the supernatural and science first established by Frankenstein. Is science still an important ingredient for this genre of fiction? Encourage students to cite other motifs that modern tales of the supernatural share with their 19th-century precursors. Explore also the competing tendencies within the genre toward allegorical or symbolic meaning on the one hand and the creation of extreme emotional effects on the other. As a follow-up to this class discussion, have students write a critical review of a contemporary tale of the supernatural, evaluating it against the standards set by the Romantic-era originators of the genre.

techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts. (more)
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. (more)
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. (more)

National Council for the Social Studies
2. Time, Continuity, and Change (more)
8. Science, Technology, and Society (more)

National Standards for Arts Education

Theatre
1. Script writing through improvising, writing, and refining scripts based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history (more)
7. Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions (more)
8. Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and the present (more)

View your state's standards

BEST COPY AVAILABLE